

**Department of Historic Resources  
Reconnaissance Level Survey**

**Accomack**

**DHR Id#: 001-0027-0103**

**Resource Identification**

Property Name(s): ..... WFF # V-130 – Observation Tower {Current}  
Property Date: ..... 1949  
Address(s): ..... North end of Wallops Island {Current}  
County/Independent City: ..... Accomack  
Vicinity of: ..... Chincoteague  
State, Zip: ..... Virginia 23337  
USGS Quad Name: ..... WALLOPS ISLAND  
Surrounding area: ..... Rural

**National Register Eligibility Status**

Property is Historic (50 years or older)

**Resource Description**

Ownership Status: ..... Public - Federal  
Acreage: ..... 0.5

**Primary Resource Exterior Component Description:**

<u>Component</u>	<u>Comp Type/Form</u>	<u>Material</u>	<u>Material Treatment</u>
Chimneys	Chimneys - None		
Foundation	Foundation - Slab	Concrete	Foundation - Poured
Porch	Porch - None		
Structural System	Structural System - Frame	Steel	Structural System - Steel

Site Description: ..... Located on the North end of Wallops Island beyond the North end of Island Road on a dirt trail.

**WUZIT Count:**

<u>No.</u>	<u>Wuzit Types</u>	<u>Historic?</u>
1	Other	Historic

**NR Resource Count:**

**Individual Resource Information**

WUZIT: ..... Other

Est. Date of Construction: .... 1949 {Owner/written data}

Accessed? ..... Yes

Primary Resource? ..... Yes

Number of Stories: ..... 0.0

Architectural Style: ..... Octagon Mode

Condition: ..... Rebuilt

Interior Plan Type: ..... Other

Threats to Resource: ..... None Known

Description: This tall, four-story, square-plan tower, built in 1949, is made of steel with a wood superstructure (likely a later addition). The four corner posts of the inner steel tower taper inward as they rise. A series of steel ladders are located within the center of the tower, rising to a number of landing platforms. The top of the steel tower was originally encircled by a steel platform that served as an observation deck and was used to mount scientific and tracking equipment including theodolites. The steel tower and observation deck are now enclosed in a larger wood tower that is square in plan and rises straight up from the ground. A wood staircase encircles the exterior of the structure, and from grade rises against the west, south, east, and then north elevations before reaching a small landing at the top on the west elevation that provides access to a larger observation platform, which is surrounded by wood posts and railings.

**Cemetery Information**

**Bridge Information**

**National Register Eligibility Information**

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*Historic Context(s):* ..... Military/Defense  
Technology/Engineering

*Historic Time Period(s):*..... S- The New Dominion (1941- Present)

*Significance Statement:* This tower, built in 1949, is one of a series of observation towers constructed by the U.S. Navy's Naval Air Ordnance Test Station (NAOTS) for photography and theodolite stations (a surveyor's instrument that is placed on an elevated shore-based vantage point) to track ordnance testing operations. This tower is the only remaining example; all other structures from this period on the island have been removed. While the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (NACA) owned most of the Island at that time, NACA leased a portion of the north end of the island to the U.S. Navy for their use as an ordnance testing range. The structure is located along the north shore of Wallops Island in a heavily wooded area.

The structure is representative of secondary resource to a Military/Defense research facility built at the beginning of the New Dominion Period (1945 to present) period. The U.S. Navy constructed the building as an Observation Tower associated with ordnance test range operations for the Naval Air Ordnance Test Station (NAOTS) and was one of several such towers built by the U.S. Navy on Wallops Island in the late 1940s. In 1946, the U.S. Navy expanded the mission of CNAAS to include the Naval Air Ordnance Test Station (NAOTS). From 1948 to 1959 NAOTS conducted bomb drops and firing on the island. In 1951 Chincoteague Naval Auxiliary Air Station became a Naval Air Facility, with a primarily-research based mission that corresponded with the mission of NAOTS until the base was closed in 1959. In 1959, the ownership of CNAAS/NAOTS was transferred to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and was renamed Wallops Station. The structure has been unused since that time.

The Observation Tower has been evaluated both as a contributing resource in a historic district and as an individual resource. Issues of significance, integrity and district boundaries were carefully considered. A proposed district comprising this resource lacks integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association due to the removal of the majority of buildings from the period of significance (1936 to 1959) and the construction of later buildings. Thus a historic district here is not eligible under Criterion A, B, C or D.

As an individual resource, it is not eligible for listing in the National Register or the Virginia Landmarks Register under Criterion A, B, C, or D as it is not associated with a significant event or individual at the local, state or national level; it does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant or distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; nor does this property have the potential for providing additional information in history or prehistory.

The resource retains its integrity of location and feeling. Although remaining in its historic location, the structure's integrity of design, materials, workmanship have been negatively impacted by the introduction of a wood superstructure around the original steel tower. The integrity of setting and association have also been adversely affected by the changes made to the surrounding setting of the base of which it was a part; by 2004 the majority of CNAAS buildings of this period have been demolished, changing the historic character of the physical environment of the structure's historic context.

***Bibliographic Documentation***

**Department of Historic Resources  
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*Reference #: 1*

*Bibliographic RecordType:* ..... Map

*Author:* ..... Giffels and Valet

*Citation Abbreviation:* .....

*Notes:* ..... Giffels and Valet, Engineers and Architects, Detroit, Michigan. "General Plot Plan – Auxiliary Air Station, Chincoteague, Virginia." 1942.

*Reference #: 2*

*Bibliographic RecordType:* ..... Map

*Author:* ..... U.S. Navy

*Citation Abbreviation:* .....

*Notes:* ..... "Map of Navy Auxiliary Air Station and Naval Ordnance Test Station, Chincoteague, Virginia." 1950.

*Reference #: 3*

*Bibliographic RecordType:* ..... Map

*Author:* ..... U.S. Navy

*Citation Abbreviation:* .....

*Notes:* ..... "Station Development Map – Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Naval Aviation Ordnance Test Station, Chincoteague, Virginia." 1953.

**Ownership Information**

**Graphic Media Documentation**

<i>Medium</i>	<i>Depository ID #</i>	<i>Photo Depository</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>File Name</i>
35mm B&W	21542	DHR	2004/07/99	Frames 1-4

**Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Events**

*CRM Event # 1,*

*Cultural Resource Management Event:* ..... Reconnaissance Survey

*Date:* ..... 2004/07/99

*Organization or Person:* ..... URS Group

*VDHR Project ID # Associated with Event:* .. 2003-0571

*CRM Event Notes or Comments:* ..... 200 Orchard Ridge Drive, Suite 101  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

*CRM Event # 2,*

*Cultural Resource Management Event:* ..... Reconnaissance Survey

*Date:* ..... 2003/08/08

*Organization or Person:* ..... URS Group

*VDHR Project ID # Associated with Event:* .. 2003-0571

*CRM Event Notes or Comments:* ..... 7101 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 700  
Bethesda, MD 20814